

The return of geopolitics in intelligence work

A conference organized by BISC in collaboration with RUSRA-KUIAD, Hybrid Warfare Research Institute Zagreb (HWRI) & European Corporate Security Association (ECSA)

Monday, March 20th 2023



A lot of countries have invested heavily in upgrading their intelligence capacities, trying to get an edge over others. Sensitive geopolitical information appears to be vulnerable in today's digital society and malicious actors are waiting for an opportunity to exploit the smallest security liabilities. European politicians fear being targeted by the Pegasus spyware or hacking software and recent cases such as the arrest of an employee of the Bundesnachrichtendienst, the German foreign intelligence service, who allegedly spied for the Russian intelligence services, as well as a Belgian consul that was convicted for the same offence, show that espionage is still prevalent today.

But countries also try to interfere in (geo)political matters. The Russian interference in the French and German national elections in 2017 and in the Brexit campaign in 2016, clearly shows the interest in influencing the functioning of other countries. The corruption affair in the European Parliament proves the intention countries like Qatar and Morocco have in getting a foothold in political institutions.

Intelligence work is therefore extremely important to detect and prevent actions of espionage, interference, subversion and destabilization in an early stage. During this conference, experts from different countries will talk about the important role intelligence work plays in a geopolitical context.

Program

Chair: Robin Libert (BISC & RUSRA-KUIAD) and Kathleen Van Acker (ADIV)

- 09.30 – 09.50: Welcome speeches
Guy Rapaille (president of BISC), **Robin Libert** (BISC & RUSRA-KUIAD) & **Kathleen Van Acker** (BISC & ADIV)
- 09.50 – 10.20: “*Cognitive Warfare, Role of Information and its impact on Societies.*”
Dr. Vira Ratsiborynska (Free University of Brussels)
- 10.20 – 10.50: “*System analysis, a horizon scan of factors related to globalization, interstate competition, climate, and economy posing a threat to critical infrastructure.*”
Prof. dr. Giliam de Valk (University of Leiden) & **Dr. David Vaandrager** (University of Leiden)
- 10.50 – 11.10: Coffee break
- 11.10 – 11.40: “*China and the Future Balance of Power: The Middle Kingdom.*”
Prof. dr. Sven Biscop (Egmont – Royal Institute for International Relations & Ghent University)
- 11.40 – 12.10: “*Africa at the centre stage of the new (il)liberal world order.*”
Prof. dr. Nina Wilén (Egmont – Royal Institute for International Relations & Lund University)
- 12.10 – 13.30: Lunch
- 13.30 – 14.00: “*Views of the intelligence agencies.*”
TBD
- 14.00 – 14.30: “*The renewed dream of a Greater Serbia and destabilization attempts in the Western Balkans.*”
Assist. prof. Gordan Akrap (University North & Hybrid Warfare Research Institute)
- 14.30 – 15.00: *The Corporate World: from Marketing to Competitive Intelligence. What’s in a name?*
ir. Yvan De Mesmaeker (European Corporate Security Association (ECSA), ATHENA & Ghent University)
- 15.00 – 15.30: Coffee break

15.30 – 16.30: *Panel debate with the speakers*
Chair: **prof. dr. Marc Cools** (Ghent University)

16.30 – 16.45: *Closing remarks*
Prof. dr. Pieter Leloup (Free University of Brussels & Ghent University)

Location

Club Prince Albert
Karmelietenstraat 20, 1000 Brussel
Rue des Petits Carmes 20, 1000 Bruxelles

BISC Working Group

Chris Bombeke (BISC Secretary)
Prof. dr. Marc Cools (Ghent University)
Prof. dr. Emmanuel Debruyne (Université Catholique de Louvain)
Drs. Mathias Desmet (Ghent University)
Prof. dr. Pieter Leloup (Free University of Brussels & Ghent University)
Robin Libert (RUSRA-KUIAD and VSSE)
Robin Liefferinckx (National Crisis Center)
Guy Rapaille (BISC)
Kathleen Van Acker (ADIV)
Karin Van Peteghem (Ghent University)

Practical information

Cost: 115 Euro. Included: drinks, lunch and scientific journal “Cahiers Inlichtingenstudies nr. 12: German Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence in Belgium during the 20th Century.”
Price for students: 25 euro without the journal, 60 euro with the journal.

Registration: people who are interested have to register on the following website:
<https://congrezzo.ugent.be/bisc-conference-032023/>

You will receive a confirmation e-mail. The subscription is definite after payment. You can only pay beforehand – on-site payment is not possible – and you can only enter the premises if your payment is completed on the day of the conference.

Language: the presentations will be given in English.

During this conference, the **Chatham House Rule** applies!